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THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF THE IDEA OF A FEDERATED INTER-STATE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

The federal and national idea was the central idea of the founding of the University of the South, the semi-centennial of whose organization at Lookout Mountain, July 4, 1857, has just been celebrated at Sewanee, Tennessee. Lookout Mountain is not only a notable historic centre by reason of its battle-fields; but before the battles of the Civil War made it widely known, Lookout Mountain was remarkable for the beauty of its view and became the birth-place of a great idea in peace and education.

The circumstances and the significance of the scene may be recalled, when the idea of an inter-State, a federated university—The University of the South—was formally proclaimed, the first such idea definitely set forth and elaborated in the Southern States, and in many ways, apart from the national military and naval academies, unique in the entire country.

The national holiday was purposely chosen; for a national idea was to be promulgated. The procession of bishops and laymen was festively headed, not by a choir of grammar school and college youth, but by a brass band and concourse of typical American citizens. For how could there be an American Fourth of July without a band and a crowd to hurrah? The national flag floated above the speakers; an historic flag that had seen service both in foreign waters and at home, still one of the precious possessions of the University. The One Hundredth Psalm was read, in recognition that "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture;" the Declaration of Independence followed, as subscribing anew to the proclamation of liberty throughout the land.

Point Lookout had been chosen partly for its central location. It lies near the borders of three States; and tradition averred that those who had good eyes and a strong faith could further see into several more. But also the spot was symbolic of getting above and beyond the single State idea, so long dominant in the

Old South, and calling together and creating a union of States in the interest of education.

Think for a moment what this meant. It was in the fifties, consequently still in the ante-bellum South. For two hundred and fifty years, ever since Jamestown was settled, the individual colony and State idea had been emphasized. Even education had largely to be limited to the locality, and at farthest to the State. In the Southwest, where there was a new country developing, it was natural that a man like Leonidas Polk should look far beyond State lines and endeavor to coördinate a vast extent of territory. And be it remembered he was a graduate of West Point. He desired at first to found an absolutely national university under the patronage and protection of the Church, including every State and Territory in the Union wherever the Church existed. Failing in that, he would unite the most scattered portions of the country, the great South and Southwest, in educational interests. In his Address to Friends in the Southern and Southwestern States in 1856, broaching his plans, Bishop Polk used these words: "This we propose shall be a University, with all the Faculties—theology included—upon a plan so extensive, as to comprise the whole course usually embraced in the most approved Institutions of that grade, whether at home or abroad."

With a purpose "to found an institution on the most enlarged and liberal scale, to make its departments commensurate with the wants and improvements of the age in every field of philosophical research, of scientific investigation, and of discovery in the arts," and intending to escape the provincial and sectional, so far as might be, a commission was appointed to look into and report on the work of the leading universities in the Northern States, in England, and on the Continent. Breadth was the very corner-stone of the new enterprise; and wherever the best ideas could be obtained—in whatever section or country—these were not only desired but sought for.

It was a great and important undertaking, and for that and any time a difficult task. What power alone, argued this band of representatives gathered at Lookout Mountain from ten contiguous States from North Carolina to Texas—for Texas was in-

cluded from the first though not as yet organically connected, while two additional States, Kentucky and Missouri became united later—what power alone can transcend State lines and at the same time be a pledge of the highest and broadest ideals of education demanded? Only the authority and position and influence of the Episcopal Church with its historic traditions of the English race, its ideals of culture and education, its reputation for breadth of thought and conception, and its guarantee for freedom—acting in and beyond the States—they sincerely believed. At that time in the Old South they were right. The survival of the Episcopal Church alone without division after the throes of war proved it. The survival of the idea and possible organization and development of the University later, on the shadows of its former self, proved it. The appropriation of the idea by other organizations and institutions throughout its territory proved it. And finally, the cultural life and educational influence of the University attest a no less vitality of the essential truth of the idea to-day.

To quote the words of the founders: "And we call upon the men of the South to rally around us; not upon churchmen only, but upon all good men and true of whatever name and profession! If the States could have done this work, we would have let it alone. We have undertaken this thing as a Church, because there was no other way of doing it. The government of such an university must be a unit, harmonious in its principles, views, and feelings. But it is in no sense intended to be sectarian. Its curriculum will extend through every branch of learning and science—its doors will be open to students of every name and sect—its conduct will be catholic in the very highest sense of the word." Despite all the blight of war and poverty and attendant drawbacks, it is believed that in spirit these pledges have been nobly redeemed and the promises faithfully kept.

Thus, after much deliberation, these statesmen on Lookout Mountain, having set forth their ideals, gave to their projected enterprise, as best representing this inter-State and federal notion and approaching the national spirit, the name of The University of the South. There was nothing sectional in the name, but a

great federal and national idea to be understood in spirit and realized in fact. It was not to be of any one of these States alone, limited and directed to State interests and to State activity, but it was to be of and for all the States represented, and in so far for the whole country. How different from any educational project in the Southern States before it! While the States and other interests and organizations have their accredited institutions scattered, usually one for every State and even smaller division of territory, The University of the South still remains, after fifty years, true to the original idea of coördination and centralization of forces, laid down by her founders, the single institution of higher learning associated with her Church in twelve States and eighteen Dioceses, instead of the original nine.

It had been stipulated that "the location shall be as central as shall be consistent with the necessary conditions." A committee of engineers decided on Sewanee in Tennessee, where an extensive domain of several thousand acres of woodland had been offered. There were abundant natural facilities in timber and a richly-tinted building stone—permitting the University buildings to be both permanent and of native material—in fuel, both wood and coal, in pure water and pure air. It was intended that the University should create its own environment. The place and State combined two beautiful Indian names. Bishop Quintard, following tradition, always interpreted the name "Sewanee" as "mother mountain," and it has always seemed somehow fittingly connected with *alma mater*. The State of Tennessee was preferred because it was halfway between the Potomac and the Rio Grande, and yet on high land and of equable climate. Bishop Elliott of Georgia declared: "The Cumberland Plateau seems to have been formed for the benefit and blessing of the Valley of the Mississippi and the cotton-growing regions of the Southern States." Geographically and economically considered, from the point of view of the huge crescent of Gulf States from Florida to Texas and of the entire lower half of the great Mississippi basin, it is the first accessible range of mountain-land, and it is becoming year by year more and more the common meeting-ground of the Southern Central States. In a very real sense it is a centre of population and

influence. Besides, the opportunity presented for constant humanitarian educational service among the native white mountain population, the laborers in the neighboring coal mines, and the members of the large colony of Swiss immigrants, has been frankly faced by more than a generation of faithful workers in forty years personal intercourse and knowledge, in which the remarkable social and material betterment is known of all.

The national idea of a federated university thus given to the Southern States has been both imitated and challenged. Interestingly enough, no two institutions have been more closely connected than the University of the South and Vanderbilt University, not only in athletics and other forms of student rivalry, but in their origin and history. The charter of The University of the South was granted by the Tennessee Legislature January 6, 1858. The very next day, apparently inspired by the former example, a charter was obtained from the same source for a Central University, to be located in Nashville, under the auspices of the Southern Methodist Church. The latter remained on paper; but on October 10, 1860, the proposed three million endowment being in sight and a half million actually pledged, the corner-stone was laid at Sewanee. The date was ominous for any new and extended undertaking dependent upon the preservation of peace and its rewards. So far from springing into existence complete, "like Minerva, full-armed from the head of Jove," an innovation in the history of American education, as one of the orators on that occasion, President Barnard, pictured the University, she was called upon to pass through death and a resurrection, and to suffer a slow and even painful evolution. But her gain has thereby been a richer history of nobler sacrifices and closer associations, and many of her children have learned to love her with an intenser passion.

After the shock of armies had passed, during which the corner-stone at Sewanee was blown up and every vestige of habitation destroyed, the Episcopal Bishop Quintard of Tennessee (himself a native of Connecticut), with nothing left but the deserted domain and without funds, yet strong in the possession of a great idea and an infinite trust, dared to make plans

for the opening of The University of the South in what was then an actual wilderness—plans, which were consummated in 1868. General Robert E. Lee, with one consent, was invited to be the first head of the new institution; but in a noble letter, still preserved, while sympathizing fully with the projected idea and expressing the warmest wishes for its complete realization, he characteristically declined to abandon the people and the College with whom he had already cast his lot.

Incited by the example of this actual opening, however modest, two years later the Methodist Bishop McTyeire of Nashville revived the old charter idea of the Central University. Bishop Quintard had appealed to the sympathy and generosity of Englishmen, while in attendance upon the Lambeth Conference in 1867; in 1873 Bishop McTyeire successfully approached Cornelius Vanderbilt in New York, their wives being relatives. Central University, which had borrowed its inception from the example of The University of the South—even stating in the precise words of the earlier undertaking at Lookout Mountain that the institution was not to be put in operation before half a million dollars had been secured—was altered to Vanderbilt University.

It has not been chance that the leading part in the formation of the Association of Preparatory Schools and Colleges in the Southern States, regulating entrance examinations, and the organization and effectiveness of the Southern Inter-collegiate Athletic Association, in the work for a better athletic spirit, has fallen to these two institutions, Vanderbilt and Sewanee, side by side, as representative of a wide Southern territory.

About the same time the federated idea was developed, as it is still being urged, for a central teachers' normal college for the Southern States in Nashville, named for George Peabody. The Southwestern Presbyterian University at Clarksville and the Southwestern Baptist University at Jackson, both products of the seventies and both again in Tennessee, still developed the same idea, though on a smaller scale. In the eighties the placing of the Southern Chautauqua on the Cumberland Plateau at Mont-eagle, but six miles from Sewanee, had been suggested by the presence of the University. The very recent evolution of the

Summer School of the South at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and the project of a Chattanooga University are still other developments of the same idea. Interestingly enough, every one of these enterprises has been located in Tennessee, after the pattern of The University of the South, for similar fundamental reasons, viz., owing to the central position of Tennessee among Southern States and the equability of the climate. But if all these several ideas and undertakings afterwards developed could conceivably have been united into one, it would have been only what the founders planned and intended should be the spirit and influence of The University of the South upon her portion of our country.

True to her declared principles, The University of the South was the first in her section called upon after war time to enunciate the principle of the freedom of the professor's chair. In 1891-2, and a year or two later, some passages in certain publications by a professor provoked animated discussion, and in certain quarters there was a noisy newspaper attempt to demand his resignation. The Board of Trustees took no uncertain stand. He had done nothing more than express convictions on great public questions about which men might differ, and even though the members of the Board individually might and did disapprove of certain statements, the professor had only exercised the right of his individual opinion. Believing firmly in the principle of freedom of research to ascertain truth and in the liberty of speech in expressing conviction, they dropped the charges forthwith; and the professor was retained as an honored member of the Sewanee Faculty for years until his call and promotion to a metropolitan university. This was some years in advance of similar cases of persecution East and West, North and South, on account of differences in political, economical, sociological and religious opinion, not always so wisely administered. The founding of THE SEWANEE REVIEW fifteen years ago as a critical and literary journal with pronounced freedom of speech, as well as the appearance of other publications of mark and breadth, have been characteristic of an academic atmosphere conscious of its historic and widely representative nature.

The University of the South has remained, despite criticism,

faithful to its original name and idea—an earnest of corresponding ideals to be striven for and realized. At all times the University's relations to the entire South and a large extent of our country besides, and her consequent breadth of spirit, have proved the source of her real strength, and given to her her true position. True, no longer can she lay any exclusive claim to the possession and use of the idea upon which she was founded. But the idea is as great as ever it was; and its spirit is none the less hers through her past, in her present, and in the hopes for her future. The main inheritance from the founders of The University of the South has proved to be a great Idea. The University seeks no less to-day to live up to this idea, as far as possible—in matters of honor, honor in student conduct and attitude and in athletics, and in principles of education and scholarship and culture and life—as it seeks to transmit it undimmed and unsullied. For the University derives not from one place and one State and one thought, but from many; and it strives to represent the best ideas drawn from all the States and from many phases of thought and opinion.

The educational development during the last quarter of a century—half of Sewanee's lifetime—shows that the vitality of the inter-State, federated, national idea is still the most effective in American education. The real life of a University depends upon the clear recognition of its principles and its ideals. A great idea alone heartens students and professors—both workers. A great idea alone, with worthy men, both in the chairs and on the benches, endeavoring constantly and clear-sightedly to realize it, can convince the world.

THE EDITOR.